DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 244 045 UD 023 597

TITLE	Unprepared for P.R.E.P. A Study of the Implementation of the Program to Raise Educational Performance in New York City's High Schools, Fall 1983.
INSTITUTION	Educational Priorities Panel, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE	Mar 84
NOTE	62p.; For a related document, see UD 023 577.
PUB TYPE	Reports - General (140)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Eligibility; Evaluation Methods; *Grade 9; High Schools; Inservice Teacher Education; Program Development; *Program Effectiveness; *Program Implementation; Remedial Mathematics; *Remedial Programs; Remedial Reading; Resource Allocation; *Thematic Approach
IDENTIFIERS	New York City Board of Education; *Program to Raise Educational Performance NY

ABSTRACT

This document tracks the 1983 implementation in 11 New York City schools of the Program to Raise Educational Performance (PREP), designed for ninth graders who do not meet high school entrance requirements. Under the program, students may enter high school, take credit courses, and also receive special support and theme-related remedial reading and math instruction. It was found that (1) poor communication among the Division of High Schools, the high schools, and the feeder schools regarding the program's goals, structure, pupil eligibility, and funding led to confusion on all counts; (2) problems with the new computerized high schools admissions process compounded the confusion; (3) funding was inadequate; (4) the program was not serving thousands of eligible students; (5) some schools lacked both the funding and the expertise to develop the required theme-centered hands-on experience; some vocational schools had trouble with assigned students who were not interested in their specialized curricula; (6) 5 of the 11 schools did not provide the required two-to-four periods of remedial education; (7) schools were not given adequate guidance or technical assistance to develop PREP programs and in some cases did not take the responsibility or initiative themselves; teachers were given no training in remedial or literacy instruction. In light of the evaluation findings, a number of recommendations for improving PREP are offered. (CMG)

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A STUDY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM TO RAISE EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN NEW YORK CITY'S HIGH SCHOOLS, 1978-1979

UD023597

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INTRODUCTION/SUMMARY

Recent reports on public education have become the focus of popular debate, urging new standards and tougher challenges for high school students. Amid these concerns, the members of the Educational Priorities Panel want to make sure that our public education system serves all our students, not only those most academically able. Those students who are at risk of dropping out before high school or within the first year, those who have not mastered the basic skills sufficiently to participate in subject classes (let alone face even tougher requirements), and those with special needs must not be overlooked in the search for educational excellence. Accordingly, the EPP has undertaken a monitoring and documentation effort to examine one recent high school remedial effort in New York City, the Program to Raise Educational Performance (PREP), for incoming ninth graders.

In the spring of 1983, the Educational Priorities Panel had urged Chancellor Alvarado to develop a comprehensive remedial program similar to the original plans for PREP. The previous administration's plan for a nonmatriculated/no credit status for first-year high school students performing below grade level had run into numerous snags. After almost a year's planning, no service or program design existed. Thousands of students who had either never passed the seventh grade gate (after two repetitions) or had squeaked through only to fall behind again in the eighth grade, were left in a state of limbo, uncertain about their status for the following September. In response, Chancellor Alvarado instituted the PREP program for these youngsters

in order to provide both the necessary remediation and support services as well as the opportunity and encouragement to proceed in a credit-bearing high school curriculum. The Educational Priorities Panel applauded this move and continues to support the overall goal and structure of the PREP program.

The following report is not an evaluation of the PREP program. It makes no attempt to measure student progress or program success. As with the EPP's earlier study of the summer PREP programs, this documentation tracks the implementation of the PREP programs in a sample of schools as compared with the formal goals, directives, and funding allocations. The concerns mentioned here were raised consistently by PREP-related school personnel in 11 of the 91 high schools offering PREP. By pinpointing the problems which arose this fall in the implementation of PREP, the Educational Priorities Panel hopes to aid the Board in its future PREP planning.

This documentation of the first semester programs (fall, 1983) provides the following general findings:

- Administration of the PREP programs has been marked by lack of clarity and poor communication among the central Division of High Schools, the high schools and the feeder schools regarding the program's goals and structure, pupil eligibility, and funding.

- Funding for the program was inadequate. Although $5.68 million were provided, part of these funds came from state and federal remedial funds already allocated to ninth graders for other remedial programs, and part came from state and federal funds normally used for remedial programs for tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders. Many schools did not reallocate these latter funds to the PREP program. Even if they had, it probably still would not have sufficed to mount an appropriate program. The funding shortage was compounded by a citywide cut in funds for the high schools. Additional funds are available for the spring semester to begin to address this issue.

- The system has yet to clear up last spring's confusion about who would be eligible for the ninth grade and/or PREP programs and the content of the programs. The result was that, throughout the fall semester, students were shuttled from course-to-course or school-to-school, or even placed on hold until classes and programs were created.

- Another source of confusion arose from the problems of the new computerized high school admissions process. The EPP has been carefully monitoring this process with the Division of High Schools to insure that it runs smoothly and that the procedures are amended to provide adequate information, access, and time to students, parents and schools. In the meantime, many students were not sure which school to attend in September and schools did not know whom to expect.

- In addition eligibility for the PREP program was initially not clear to school administrators. The problems with the admissions process and changes in high school entry requirements also meant that more students than usual arrived at schools with neither pre-registration nor student records containing test scores. The results of October 1983 reading and math tests will further expand the list of eligible students for the spring semester.

- Before the beginning of school, high school principals expected 11,642 students whom they had identified as eligible for either PREP A (reading between a fifth and seventh grade level) or PREP B (reading below 5th grade level). Schools in the EPP sample have identified from 25 percent more students than anticipated to more than 50 percent fewer students than originally estimated. This has confused scheduling and staffing for the program. By November, only 9,672 PREP students were reported on the registers citywide. Meanwhile, the October PSEN tests have identified a total of 15,109 PREP-eligible students on the basis of reading scores alone.

- Apparently, thousands of students eligible for PREP are not being served. They may be in regular high school classes or they may have dropped out or been lost in the process of trying to get into a high school. (Changing elibility standards and unexpected, "over-the-counter" students offset part of the decrease in identified students.) Students with a history of academic failure and significant academic deficits are at the highest risk of dropping out. To compound this with confusing instructions, inadequate notification, and a lack of preparation at the receiving high schools is equivalent to encouraging students to give up and drop out. Many students, facing a battle with the bureaucracy just to obtain a schedule and a program, will instead join the drop-out statistics.

- Schools without vocational programs or career-related educational options were at a disadvantage both in funding and experience, to develop the required theme-centered, hands-on experience curricula. On the other hand, the assignment of PREP students left many specialized vocational schools with the challenge of interesting students who had not applied to their schools.

- Five out of the 11 schools that EPP staff visited did not provide the two to four periods of remedial education as required by the PREP program. In most of these cases, attempts were made to provide some additional support. In two other schools, PREP students were simply incorporated into existing holding power and remedial programs that were already funded to provide additional services. Only four of the schools actually mounted PREP-type programs, although not all of these had a theme or a "hands-on" component.

- Regardless of the funding and the lack of time, other structural and definitional problems persisted. School personnel repeatedly stated their confusion as to the goals and objectives of the program they were to implement:

  - was the focus literacy or drop-out prevention?

  - were curricula meant to be solely remedial or cover Minimum Learning Essentials for subject work?

  - was the theme structure (organizing all lessons around one issue or subject), a device to hook student interest, or important subject matter to be learned for itself?

  - were students actually in a diploma track?

  - who had the responsibility for outreach to students who never appeared for the PREP program?

- Schools were given inadequate guidance and technical assistance to develop PREP programs and in some, but clearly not all cases, schools did not take responsibility or initiative. Initially, there was no time provided for school-based planning before the beginning of school. Teachers were given no remedial or literacy training or direct instruction about the PREP progam.

- In its plans for the spring semester, the High School Division has revived several successful components of the summer program that had not been included in the fall programs, including use of peer-tutors and additional OTPS funds for trips and other enrichment activities. This is to be commended.

In light of the findings and the continuing plight of PREP students, the Educational Priorities Panel makes the following recommendations:

First, and foremost, a PREP program is essential if the school system is to meet its responsibility to the 15,000 ninth graders to whom we have thus far failed to teach basic skills. If the program is to succeed, planning must begin immediately for the fall. The following specific steps should be taken:

1) If a school is to provide new and enriched services, there must be an additional funding allocation. Funds should not be taken from other students. The increase for the spring semester is the first step. The EPP has already proposed that the high schools receive additional funds in next year's budget through a reformed per capita allocation. This will provide better incentives to retain students at all academic levels and provide the full range of appropriate services. However, there must be a clear, comprehensive plan for PREP programs before targeted funding is provided.

2) The PREP progam should establish goals that maintain a clear focus on teaching literacy, and upgrading basic skills. Students should gain academic credits and be diploma-bound, either through the normal high school route, or for those 9th graders who are already over 16, through GED preparation or alternative routes. Eligibility must be clarified and should not entail any additional student testing.

3) In order to reach these goals, the High School Division should remain flexible about program structures, but it must help schools learn about the elements of successful approaches and take advantage of existing programs rather than wasting time and resources developing new programs and curricula, school-by-school. For example, principals and PREP coordinators should have the opportunity to share information about programs such as alternative high schools, Operation Success, and the guidelines developed in the 1982 Final Report of the Youth Literacy Task Force. Program structures should reflect both the skill level and age of the students responding to the varying needs of older students and those with less achievement.

4) The Chancellor's high school redesign initiatives must include programs to serve students with remedial needs. Special efforts should be made to inform PREP eligible students of all education options which are available.

5) All junior high school guidance counselors and principals should be informed early this spring of the eligibility criteria for PREP and the options for incoming ninth graders. This should be a part of a spring round of in-staff training for junior high school staff regarding the admissions process and the programs' opportunities for students. Furthermore, incoming PREP students must be carefully identified and accounted for in enrollment projections, program planning, and funding allocations.

6) Every incoming high school student must receive a final notification in early June of his/her placement for next year.

7) The summer program should be continued for eligible students as is already being proposed.

8) Starting in late August, there should be a special outreach effort to PREP eligible students before school begins. This might include an additional letter from the high school with the name of the PREP teacher or coordinator; telephone calls during the first week in Septemeber to students; a well publicized hotline for students and parents; assignment of peer-tutors in a "buddy" system; and information highlighting the programs available to PREP students.

9) Teacher training must be provided in remedial and literacy techniques. Supervisors should be allowed to select teachers for the PREP programs. There should be a formalized "technique exchange" for teachers.

New York City public schools continue to fail to provide a basic education to some of our neediest students. However, a number of success stories prove that this goal is not unattainable. The High School Division must provide schools with the information, assistance, and training to build on these positive experiences and unleash their creativity. With sufficient forethought, the schools can help all students to know a lasting sense of achievement.

I. BACKGROUND

The Program to Raise Educational Performance (PREP) was hastily planned in the spring and summer of 1983 as a way to help ninth graders who did not meet the entrance requirements for high school. When Chancellor Alvarado decided that the non-matriculated/no-credit status planned by the previous administration for low-achieving ninth graders was inappropriate, the credit-granting PREP program was devised so that students could enter high school, take credit-granting courses, and also receive special support and remedial instruction.

Starting in July, the summer PREP program operated in 45 high schools, providing theme-related remedial instruction in English and math, and a transitional orientation to high schools, for incoming ninth grade students.* When the EPP staff visited these summer classes, they found a number of innovative and exciting activities. Paid student mentors and weekly trips were provided. Students spent mornings in school, two afternoons a week in structured extracurricular activities, and two afternoons on trips, while teachers had the remaining afternoon each week for group planning and development of the theme-integrated approach. However, the EPP found a lack of clarity in the definitions of goals and population served and much confusion over the theme approach. School personnel

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* See EPP's August 1983 report, "Preliminary Evaluation of the PREP Program".

questioned whether the impression given of high schools was realistic and worried that the neediest ninth graders had not been reached.

To conduct this monitoring study of the fall PREP program, EPP staff visited eleven high schools in October, November, and early December of 1983. The researchers attended every monthly meeting of PREP supervisors and various afternoon work group sessions, and conducted interviews with relevant Board staff. Memoranda from the Division of High Schools were also used to document and demonstrate the information that was distributed to schools.

The schools visited included five vocational high schools and six academic/comprehensive high schools in Queens, Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx. Schools were chosen to reflect a range of high school types. However, the conclusions presented here apply only to the eleven schools studied. Interviews were conducted with personnel chosen by school representatives. Those interviewed included: four principals, nine PREP supervisors, one PREP coordinator, five PREP-related guidance counselors, and one PREP teacher/coordinator. Other PREP supervisors were interviewed informally at monthly meetings. The interview guide used in the schools can be found in Appendix A.

Like the summer program, the initial phase of the school year PREP program was marked by poor communication between the central Board, the high schools and the feeder schools. A survey conducted in late August and early September of principals and high school personnel charged with supervising and coordinating the program in 15 schools indicated that their information and communications with

the central administration were spotty. Although the High School Division had sent out a notice in June describing the new PREP program, high school staff returned to school in late August unsure of:

- program structure;
- the number of entering PREP-eligible students;
- the needs of such students and what the eligibility limits were;
- the resources available, including remediation teachers, guidance counselors, classroom space, special attendance monitors, etc.;
- how the program related to other school remedial and "holding power" programs.

The aim of the PREP program, according to those surveyed, was clear -- keep ninth graders in school. However, the means were not, especially for those 46 schools which had not had a summer PREP program. Thus supervisors anticipated receiving 11,642 PREP-eligible students in their schools, unsure of what to do with them, and, in many cases, reluctant to have them at all.

II. ADMISSIONS TO PREP PROGRAMS

Exactly who were these students eligible to be served in PREP programs? That remains unclear.

High school principals and counselors were to place these students on the basis of their reading and math scores on standardized tests. The exact cut-off scores have been reported slightly differently at different times, but in general, they are as follows: for PREP A classes, 5.1 to 7.1 in reading and 5.1 to 6.8 in math; for PREP B classes, below 5.0 in reading and math.

The test scores came from the April California Achievement Tests (CATs) which students took in the eighth grade. Students who missed this test or entered ninth grade as "over-the-counter" admissions* without records, were administered the same test at the beginning of school. In October students took the statewide PSEN test;** this score was also to be used for determining PREP eligibility.

The guidelines used for choosing PREP students have aroused great controversy. As of the December 13th citywide PREP supervisors meeting, it was evident that not all questions have been satisfactorily answered on the subject. Disparate interpretations of the guidelines regarding admissions to PREP programs continue to exist.

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* Those who have not gone through the regular admissions process, but register for a high school on-site, usually in September.

** The PSEN (Pupils with Special Educational Needs) test is the Test of Comprehensive Basic Skills published by McGraw-Hill, used to determine eligibility for state-funded remedial programs.

The first source of philosophical dispute is the use of the CAT test for placement purposes. This problem had been raised previously regarding the Promotional Gates Program. Marked clearly at the top of the test is the warning: DO NOT USE FOR PLACEMENT PURPOSES. The Board's PREP coordinator concedes that students' performance on this test does not always accurately reflect their aptitude or achievement, yet this is the primary means used to place students. Four of the 11 PREP supervisors interviewed mentioned discovering that some of their students had scored well above the fifth grade level in reading on the tests but were, in reality, functionally illiterate, while others scored poorly but read well above the ninth grade level.

Second, the majority of the supervisors considered the parameters of the program arbitrary. They questioned the reasoning behind a rigid cut-off score, based on one test. Two schools with holding power programs used broader parameters (including age), based on a school-devised needs assessment which, they said, was then used to design an academic program responsive to each student's needs.

In addition to these design questions, there were practical disputes over the admissions process, which was confused and chaotic. Continuing problems with the computerized admissions system and poor communications among the Board, the junior high schools and the high schools marked the entire process.

This was the first year of the computerized admissions process. In addition to expected computer errors, there were two major policy problems. In the fall, junior high schools were confused about whether eighth graders were to be eligible for zoned high schools

because the then Chancellor Macchiarola had proposed a "ninth grade option" which was then revoked by the Board of Education. As a result, some Community School Districts retained some of their ninth graders in junior high schools.* Then, the switch from the "non-matric" program for students who failed to meet high school eligibility requirements to a PREP program after the appointment of the new Chancellor further confused students, counselors, and principals. Thus the normally difficult admissions process became a tangled web. Many principals remained uncertain as to whom to expect in their schools, and many students never received a final assignment.

According to high school principals' June 10th reports, 9,416 PREP A students were expected, including 2,863 who failed to meet only the math standard. In addition, nine high schools were to accept 585 students in PREP B programs. By August 19th, principals expected 10,869 PREP A students and 773 PREP B students, a total of 11,642 students. However, the November attendance reports indicate that only 9,672 PREP students were enrolled. Where the missing 2,000 students are remains a mystery. Presumably, they are either in regular high school classes, unserved by PREP, or are not attending school at all. How many dropped out, discouraged by the confusion and lack of welcome in the high schools is unknown. In its report on the summer program, the EPP warned that low-achieving students need a great deal of support, guidance and encouragement during the critical transition period between junior high and high school.

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* How many ninth graders remained in district schools is unclear, and there is no way of knowing how many of these were PREP-eligible or if they are receiving PREP-type remedial services.

It is apparent that few PREP-eligible students received any of those.

In addition, the school-by-school projections were highly inaccurate. The schools surveyed reported enrollments of anywhere from 57 percent fewer to 25 percent more PREP students than they had anticipated. (See Chart 2, p. 34.) This further complicated scheduling and funding problems.

According to three junior high school guidance coordinators, as well as some PREP supervisors, some students were wait-listed in three schools while a seat was reserved for them in still another; many students were not notified of their high school assignments until as late as June 25th; some students never received notification of admission to PREP or to high school and were admitted as walk-ins in their neighborhood high schools; and many students were sent to high schools with no records, or their records went to one school while the student went to another. All schools surveyed reported difficulties receiving student records. In some schools, more than 50 percent of the ninth grade PREP students arrived without records. Over-the-counter registrants and others without records were sometimes placed in PREP programs without screening. Some schools spent an extra week scheduling new tests for students without records.

Eight community school district (CSD) reading coordinators, Gate facilitators, and guidance supervisors surveyed indicated that they and the feeder schools were not aware of the PREP program until the fall. Others at the CSD-level said they were notified in late June when it was too late to reach all students or records had already

been sent on to the high schools. One CSD guidance coordinator noted:

> "Guidance counselors in feeder schools are the best facilitators but they were not made aware of PREP and could not tell students about it. As a result, the marginally desirable kids were just left there, hanging -- the really bright kids had no problem -- the high schools picked them right up. But because of the admissions confusion there will be many floating bodies not in any school... What I worry about is all the kids no one is looking for."

Notably, no follow-up active recruitment effort for latecomers or no-shows was carried-out by the Board, nor was any made by most of the surveyed schools.

A practical and philosophical dispute continually raised at the workshop sessions of monthly meetings was whether it is the PREP supervisor's responsibility to actively pursue students who never showed up. In an interview, the Board PREP coordinator expressed his belief that outreach efforts, beyond that of having the regular attendance teacher make phone calls, were unnecessary. The Board provided no or few resources for follow-up, and the task was further complicated by the facts that many of the PREP B students were long-term absentees and the schools felt overloaded to begin with because of their admissions confusion. Many schools had not been pleased to be assigned these students in the first place. These were students requiring extra services without extra funds, who would not raise a school's academic standing. It is not surprising that staff made few efforts to bring them in. Thus, the fundamental goal of the PREP program to prevent dropouts was undermined from the outset.

Problems with the admissions process are still reverberating. Two categories of students have not yet been fully integrated into

most PREP programs, and will probably have to be accommodated: students who qualify for PREP on the basis of October PSEN scores (a total of more than 15,000, or an additional 5-6000, students); and seventh grade double holdovers who were admitted directly to high school after repeating seventh grade twice, but were not always included in PREP programs.

Recent Board information about the use of the October PSEN test scores to identify any other PREP students in the school caused great distress among supervisors at the December PREP supervisors' meeting. The test scores indicate a 50 percent increase in PREP-eligible students, and many supervisors believe that their programs will double, especially if they are asked to accommodate holdovers too. When supervisors were asked why holdovers weren't initially incorporated in PREP, they responded that the High School Division's initial guidelines had not demanded that they be included.

Another unplanned-for problem was the wide disparity in the needs, ages, and interests of PREP students. In particular, many schools mentioned that a significant proportion of their students are 16 or 17 years old and that the possibility of these students graduating in four years with a diploma is remote. According to the Board's programmatic guidelines, it is not clear how to respond to the special needs of this older population. Should PREP be a terminal school experience with an accent on life skills? Or should PREP continue teaching the grade-determined curriculum?

Finally, vocational schools were told to reserve places for PREP students in their vocational programs. This decreased the numbers of spaces open to non-PREP students, created scheduling

confusion, and resulted in the admission of students who were not interested in the vocational programs offered.

The High School Division did not take into account, either, the special nature of certain vocational schools when it assigned uninterested students to attend them. While these schools often had the most to offer in terms of a hands-on approach, not all assigned students were automatically enticed by the specific program or skill offered. This caused some resentment at the vocational schools on the part of principals and teachers who believed the "unmotivated" PREP students had "sabotaged" their schools.

Unfortunately, many of the problems of poor preparation, lost records, and confused assignments are not unusual in the high schools. However, in the case of PREP they were magnified, and unfortunately affected the most vulnerable students.

Overall, it was particularly the late and often inaccurate notification to students and to schools about the numbers and needs of PREP students that snarled the planning and programming process. "We need to know numbers, and what the kids' past educational performance has been. Otherwise we end up writing bad programs [schedules] for them and then they're stuck in the wrong classes," one supervisor explained. Despite the fact that the Division of High Schools notified the high schools about the PREP program in June, few did any planning over the summer. Board training for the program did not take place until the day before school opened in September. One supervisor who had "discovered" PREP the first week of September said:

> We should have received records far in advance to do some screening and tailor the program for the students better. We should get the records by May and start planning then.

Because school administrators were notified only in mid-September of the requirement to identify and specially code the PREP-eligible students, most schools did not know who or how many students were PREP-eligible until mid-October, at which point it was considered too late to block-program* the students and often impossible to find the students in order to provide them with the special attention they were due.

In fact, as of December, in the 11 schools visited (all of which had received funding for a PREP program):

- Five had no instructional PREP program or special classroom attention given to PREP-eligible students;
- Two had placed PREP-eligible students in existing "holding power" programs;
- Four had specific PREP-type programs.

Simply put, the majority of schools visited were partially funded to provide programs which they had not had the time (or perhaps the motivation) to develop, for students they could not easily locate or identify until mid-October. Those schools which did persevere in identifying and separating out PREP students did so with great exertion, massive scheduling changes and often a negative effect on PREP students' attendance rates for September, October and the beginning of November. Some supervisors speculated they lost students along the way because of the constant changes, a speculation that is supported by the "loss" of 2,000 students between August and November.

The result in many schools was "chaos, total chaos," in the words of one supervisor, a thought that was echoed by all but two of the eleven supervisors surveyed.

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* Schedule the students so they could be together for some or all classes.

III. PROGRAM PLANNING

Generally, PREP's goal was to smooth the transition -- which is often so rocky -- from junior high to high school and to thereby help keep students from dropping out at this critical juncture. The program's goals were also to give students a boost in basic skills so they could function at grade level, and increase their sense of school commitment and identity.

The goals and guidelines of the PREP program were presented September 12th (the day before the opening of school). Thus, since the initial notification was given during the last week of school in June, school staff had no time for planning or preparation. Those who worked during the summer, including personnel at the Division of High Schools, were busy with the summer program. During a citywide conference on the program, Division of High Schools staff were to explain the program's structure, student eligibility and resources available to schools for PREP. However, some principals said they did not know about the meeting, or they did not attend because they were not expecting a PREP program in their schools. The morning meeting included a discussion (and some controversy) over whom the summer PREP program had served, whether the ninth grade "Global History" curriculum could be made theme-related, and the inadequacy of the PREP funding allocations. The afternoon sessions were run by teams of Board curriculum and instruction resource people who explained how to integrate various themes (e.g., foods, physical education, civics) into the core curriculum. The teams presented examples and distributed work books.

Three days later, the High School Division issued guidelines for the program in High School Memorandum #17. According to these guidelines, the philosophy for PREP is:

> ...a means to revisit (sic) and improve techniques for basic skills instruction. The emphasis lies in creativity and innovation in developing challenging programs for incoming ninth grade students who are deficient in basic skills. The ninth grade is the focus of this initial effort since they (sic) are particularly "at risk" of becoming alienated from the school environment.

The program structure was outlined as follows:

> Each school is asked to select a theme which captures the interests of the students and capitalizes upon the unique talents of the PREP staff. This theme becomes the vehicle of integrating basic skills instruction. For guidance, please refer to the two guidebooks:
>
> - Developing a Prep Program - A Guide for Supervisors (High School Division, August 1983)
>
> - Prep Program - Thematic Planning - Fall 1983 (Division of Curriculum and Instruction, September 1983)

For example, if food was the theme, math lessons might include calculating daily nutritional intake, while English lessons might include reading menus, writing recipes, following directions, etc. Science lessons could emphasize nutrition, while social studies could include discussions of world hunger or cultural differences in foods.

A subsequent memo in December on guidelines for the spring PREP programs did not explicitly discuss program structure. A "School Plans" section states:

> The following common elements have been identified from successful Fall, 1983 programs:
>
> - a thematic approach with the infusion of basic skills and hands-on activities;

- a school program of staff development;
- a program of enrichment activities, e.g., trips, speakers, after-school clubs;
- an enhanced guidance program; e.g., periodic individual and group counseling, career exploration workshops, intervention team.

Schools should modify their PREP plans based on the evaluation criteria set in the initial PREP plans.

(Memorandum #17, December 13, 1983)

The major complaint both at the original PREP supervisors' meeting and as of December 1983, was that the guidelines were vague and too general. Of the 11 supervisors interviewed, three were unsure about whether the program ought to have a literacy stress, five thought the literacy stress was not important, and three thought that the "holding power" of the program (to prevent drop-outs) was the main goal. While the vagueness was apparently intentional in order to allow each school maximum flexibility in structuring the program, discussions with school personnel suggest that the vagueness led to uncertainty about the program's structure, focus and the degree to which themes should be integrated into the curriculum. Notably, in its analysis of the summer PREP program, the EPP recommended that "a redefinition and clarification of goals be the Board's major effort this year" (p.2).

The late arrival of the guidelines and the expectation that schools rearrange their curriculum to accommodate the PREP program also incensed many school personnel. As one person said," PREP is just another program for doing more with less and making it look good."

The disparity in school personnel's interpretations of the programs' goals seems to be a reflection of the consequences of such broad guidelines. As the EPP summer report predicted, "The method of establishment and implementation of the fall PREP programs was unclear to most assistant principals and remains, in our minds, questionably structured and likely to be irregularly implemented" (p.3). The following questions remained unanswered as late as mid-December:

- Is the intent to keep ninth graders in school or have them pass classes?
- Is the theme a means to motivate students to obtain basic skills or important subject matter, serving as the actual focus?
- Can PREP A students (reading at 5.1 to 7.1) be integrated in classes with PREP B (reading below 5.0) students?
- Should PREP students be programmed together in special classes or join regular classes?
- Is the PREP program a "terminal" educational experience for students not expected to complete high school?
- Should schools make efforts to recruit assigned no-show students into the program?
- Should credit be given for special PREP classes?

Another universal complaint about the program guidelines was that poor planning had produced not only vague guidelines but also poor timing of program implementation. In most schools visited, the first marking period was over before the PREP students had even been identified.

PREP supervisors and school principals also repeatedly pointed to another fundamental oversight on the part of the Board: the program was implemented in the high schools without taking into

account the variation in existing high school programs and the existence of holding power programs in some schools. While the High School Division's guidelines clearly stated that PREP should "dovetail" with existing programs, supervisors complained that the short time allowed for programming and planning and the uncertainties about the exact program structure made this a difficult task.

In non-specialized high schools with little equipment and "hands-on" resources, and in those schools with little experience with low-achieving student populations, the program came as a burdensome imposition which some schools chose to tackle and others chose to ignore. One PREP supervisor noted:

> "The danger is that some schools will use the concept of allowed diversity as a license to do little or nothing."

He said he would have preferred to have more structure and direction:

> "I understand they don't want to impose structure but they're going to have to -- about administering and structuring the program."

In contrast, supervisors in the vocational schools visited repeatedly said they were glad the Board left them alone to do what they normally do, which is, insert the theme where it fits and provide hands-on experience. It is important to note that these schools had curricula, supplies, and equipment available. Also, vocational schools benefit from a mandated class size for shop classes that is already below regular class size, as well as funding, on average, for more class periods.

Obviously, the disparity in school resources and its effect on program type and structure were not considered in the Board's implementation plans or funding for the program. Differences in school resources, in conjunction with the poorly defined program

expectations, have significantly affected the type and quality of programs offered to PREP-eligible ninth graders and the willingness of schools to make PREP a priority. One vocational high school principal noted:

> "We're not plumbers. We're educators. The Board has not understood the uniqueness of each school and how we, for instance, designed our school to meet the special needs of our special students. To give us no planning time to adapt the program to the school and to expect an academic school will have the same effect we will when it has none of the resources, is ridiculous!"

Clearly, central Board direction, though flexible, was not well received in the high schools. PREP supervisors and coordinators reported feeling alienated and "dumped on." Certain principals likewise felt they had not been consulted adequately, or at all, in the central planning of the program. Ten of the 11 supervisors interviewed felt the monthly PREP supervisors' workshops were not very helpful. One said they were only a help insofar as "we see how terribly everyone else is doing," and how "their program isn't working either." Another remarked:

> "When I leave one of those [monthly] meetings I feel enlightened: I see I'm not the one doing things wrong even if I don't know exactly what 'right' is anyway."

Supervisors in one borough, who were first told to integrate and then to separate PREP A students from PREP B, reported they were exhausted from the scheduling and rescheduling of these students.

Furthermore, supervisors interviewed are already worrying about what to do to revive teachers' morale after this term's late start and frequent changes, particularly since, as everyone agreed, "this program will not work if teachers don't care." One teacher who had been teaching five oversized classes until October, then had

been scheduled to take guidance duties and paperwork for the PREP group at his school, remarked that the whole thing

> "seems really poorly conceived to me. It's not something you should lay on a system and then say, 'work.' No start-up time was given -- unless you consider this term as start-up time."

In fact, site visits to the schools suggest that much of the first two marking periods of PREP-eligible ninth graders in New York City high schools was spent waiting for administrative confusion to settle, while students were shuttled around and/or received no special services. Special comment and accolades for their strenuous efforts in the face of complicated confusion are due for those teachers and supervisors who persevered and developed a PREP program. Clearly the failure in the other schools to implement a program was due in part to real time and scheduling problems and funding shortages (discussed in Chapter V), and in part by a reluctance on the part of school personnel to make the extra effort required and to accept responsibility for students with severe academic deficiencies.

IV. PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The High School Division's guidelines for structuring the program were first described in Memorandum #102, June 1983, to high schools and were then redistributed, as noted earlier, at the September 12, 1983 PREP coordinators' meeting. This original PREP memo addressed the question of structure under the heading "organization."

> Students (according to instructional need) may be block-programmed for two periods of mathematics daily and/or two periods of English-Communication Arts in classes no larger than 20 pupils each. An additional period of science or Social Studies may be block programmed with the communication arts class. This additional period will contain specific materials for reading in the content area but will be taught by the content area teachers.

A listing of suggested models of student programs was attached.

At the September citywide meeting, guidelines were supplemented by an afternoon's worth of examples and presentations of curriculum exemplifying the "theme-integration" idea and how to use it when structuring the program. According to the materials distributed by the High School Division at that time:

> The PREP program emphasizes the creativity of each school. There are no central models or mandates. The focus is on individual school planning to best meet the needs of the school's students and staff.
>
> (Memorandum, "Answers to Some Frequently Asked Questions") September 12, 1983

Memorandum #17 (September 15, 1983) did not address the issue of program structure at all; it reiterated, however, that:

> ...the emphasis lies in creativity and innovation in developing challenging programs for incoming ninth grade students who are deficient in basic skills.

The Division also distributed a "planning tool" to help PREP supervisors integrate themes with core material. The tool was a blank page except for the following headings:

Theme

Theme Related Topics	English Concepts (MLE)	Reading/ Writing Processes	Suggested Activities

The school was also expected to complete a plan which would also be used as a means of assessing how well the school had met its goals. The plan had the following structure:

Plan

Activity to Be Performed	By Whom	When	How Success Will Be Evaluated

Prep Plan for Staff Development

Number of Planned Sessions
Topics to be covered
Assistance needed
Who are staff developers
Signatures of teachers who have reached consensus on this plan.

Of the 11 PREP supervisors interviewed, eight found these planning tools useless. One supervisor remarked, "I felt like I was walking into a void when I had to fill it out."

The generalities of the guidelines do, indeed, allow for school choice. A school can choose whether it wants science or social studies to be programmed with the communication arts classes. It can choose whether or not to block program classes.

The lack of specificity in the guidelines was reflected in the range and type of programs found in the schools. As mentioned

previously, of the 11 schools visited and funded to provide PREP, only four had classroom PREP programs at all, five had no instructional program but provided some limited additional support services, and two placed PREP-eligible students into existing holding power programs. This disparity in types of programs reflected the variety of administrators' perceptions of the focus of the program. For instance: supervisors in five schools believed that the Board had no work-awareness or work-readiness goals for PREP; supervisors in five other schools were sure that the Board meant work-skills training; one supervisor was unsure.

The problems the EPP observed in the summer program's theme-integrated approach and program structure can be seen again in the year-round program. In the summer program, it was clear that schools with the most well-defined programs during the year -- such as vocational schools -- also had the most theme-integrated programs during the summer, and were best able to integrate educational instruction with the afternoon activities and trips. Programs in other, non-vocational schools with few resources, equipment or the spark of a teacher's idea, had difficulty choosing a workable theme and integrating it into only two (math and English) classes. On the one hand, the High School Division can be applauded for allowing a form of decentralized creativity to flourish in both the summer and year-round programs. On the other hand, it could also be accused of not taking adequate leadership in clearly delineating the PREP program's goal (holding power or literacy) or the structure (mainstreamed or self-contained),

or the use of the theme (as a means of teaching basic reading and and math skills or to teach the theme itself).

Following is a description of each program visited, the additional tax levy unit allocation for it,* and the explanation given by school personnel for the lack of a program, where appropriate.

Schools With No Instructional PREP Program

School 1: No program for the 500 PREP-eligible ninth graders (total 9th grade is 700 students) in this academic/comprehensive high school. One teacher provides three periods a day of counseling to PREP-eligible students.

Allocation: 1.47 units

Reasons: The Superintendent initially wanted integration of PREP and non-PREP students, so the identification of PREP students was slowed considerably and their separation through block programming never occurred. The equipment necessary for teaching the theme was not available. Teachers did not want to teach the PREP program, and obtained union support to resist. Those PSEN/Chapter I eligible students are in appropriate reading labs.

School 2: There was no program for the small number (32) of PREP A eligible students in this vocational high school. Eligible students are in PSEN/Chapter I programs for reading/writing support.

Allocation: .35 units

Reasons: The theme is already integrated, where possible, in the school curricula as the school is a theme-based school. The lack of lead time for planning or identifying students also contributed to the supervisor's refusal to initiate a program in mid-term. The only special services the PREP students are receiving are those of a paraprofessional who monitors their attendance and aids the teachers in the PSEN/Chapter I classes.

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* The allocation formula for the PREP programs is described fully in the next section. A unit is equal to the average high school teacher's salary.

School 3: Of the 800 9th grade students in this zoned academic/comprehensive high school, 300 were "ferretted out" and identified as Prep eligible by late September. There is no program in this school although a minischool Prep program is being planned for the spring term.

Allocation: 1.47 units

Reasons: The late notification about Prep would have required that all Prep students be reprogrammed for a block-program within the school. "We were not prepared to do that," the supervisor said. "Right now," he continued, "there is no way to hook kids' interest. The program is dependent on isolating the students as a group to work with them on attendance problems and explore career interests with them." The supervisor felt that without planning, the school did not have the capability to block program a theme-integrated approach. Furthermore, the lack of lead time made the idea of mid-term block programming too disruptive to consider. In the meantime, eligible students are taking PSEN/Chapter I classes in which the readings for science and social studies classes are reviewed. Part of a guidance counselor's time and all of a family assistant's time are being used to monitor Prep students' attendance and tend to any behavioral difficulties. The supervisor has been relieved of one class and is actively planning the spring program and meeting with Prep teachers to develop it.

School 4: This vocational high school expected 170 Prep A eligible ninth graders. However, due to the school's misinterpretation of the guidelines for eligibility, the school received only 95 students; 75 are currently attending.

Allocation: .35 units

Reasons: Because the entire school is overcrowded this year due to an unprecedented number of incoming ninth graders, and because the coordinator position had not yet been filled in mid-October due to a Division of Personnel delay, it was decided to mainstream the Prep students. Until extra staff for the entire school can be added to reduce the overcrowding of classes and a coordinator can plan and implement a theme-related program, these students are receiving only attendance attention from a family assistant (.35 unit); a remaining unit is being saved for the coordinator's position when approved.

School 5: This academic/comprehensive school with over 200 Prep students of its 900 ninth graders, has simply absorbed the students into its theme-oriented classes. Eligible students were placed in enriched math and English classes with other, non-Prep students, even before they were

identified as Prep-eligible. If they are to be block programmed, it will only be for homeroom. "The integration of the vocational education theme was done years before. The Prep program is just sharpening it," the coordinator explained, either by allowing Prep students to participate in a volunteer program (to be implemented in the spring) or by taking a vocational course one year earlier than the other students.

Allocation: 1.47 units

Reasons: The late program start and identification of students made block programming them impossible without rearranging the programs of the remaining 700 ninth graders. Furthermore, since the school's curricula were entirely theme-based to begin with, school personnel felt the major goal of the program was satisfied. Whether this goal was reached at the teaching level and according to student need, is open to question. School personnel focused their attention on determining how to provide students with special attention using the allocation distributed by the principal -- half a guidance counselor's time.

Schools with Existing Holding Power Programs

School 6: This vocational school put its Prep A population into its holding power program. Entrance to the holding power program was based on broader criteria than those used for the 90 Prep students. The major difference between the two types of students was that the Prep students, who had been assigned to the school, were less motivated than the students who had selected the school but were unable to meet all its academic requirements. The Prep program dovetailed easily with the HP program: the theme is introduction to the world of work and students take a period of exploratory hands-on trade class, special attention to students is given in part through a senior pal program, and students are block programmed into attending two periods a day of remedial English and one period of remedial math. The major problem is the class size difference between PSEN/Chapter I (20) classes and tax levy classes (38-40) which make teaching and programming particularly difficult.

Allocation: .35 units

Note: The tax levy funds for the holding power program were reduced in anticipation of the Prep program allocation which was smaller than expected. The effect was a net loss in the program's funding.

School 7: This zoned academic/comprehensive high school has an extensive set of holding power programs which are aimed primarily at tenth graders. Due to late planning and significant administrative changes in the distribution of assistant principals, there was no PREP program until mid-October for 107 of the 1,400 ninth graders. Students were placed in remedial classes and the theme of the holding power programs (medical professions) was mentioned there "but really not fully integrated," according to the coordinator, due to the lack of planning time. Seminars for PREP students are given every two weeks to introduce students to different medical professions. A guidance counselor spends time with truant students. There is no hands-on approach in the program, due to a lack of time in the students' schedules and a lack of equipment. The stress is primarily literacy and secondly holding power, although the coordinator is quick to point out that one cannot be achieved without the other. Class sizes are above the Chapter I mandated limit of 20. The tax levy class sizes are also over the 34-student limit.

Allocation: .35 units

Reasons: The change in assistant principals as well as the late program start-up caused such confusion that by the time a teacher had been assigned to coordinate the program, the time limit for claiming and using the .35 units had run out and the school was prohibited from hiring a family assistant, or using the funds to take the students on trips, or hiring student mentors. The school nevertheless relieved one teacher of two classes to coordinate the program and added 100 PREP students to a guidance counselor's load.

Schools with Prep Programs

School 8: The theme of this zoned high school with over 300 of its 800 ninth grade students in PREP A, is "caring and communication." The supervisor explained that students write their own "plan for passing" under the guidance of mentors and teachers. The theme is incorporated by asking students to do two interviews/term, and making them feel like part of a community. "There is nothing new under the sun," explained the supervisor. "We see this as a two-step process: (1) keep them in class; and (2) improve their skills, have them answer in full sentences." There is no literacy stress and the curriculum has not been changed to better reflect "communication." Students are block programmed for homeroom, math, English, reading skills and social studies; four periods a day are for "PREP." Teachers volunteered to teach the classes which ranged in size from 38 to 40. The program was "ill-defined" and "expanded too fast." This program has no "hands-on" or vocational opportunities although the PREP coordinator and supervisor are trying to develop extracurricular activities

to fill this need. Many of the students (possibly 50%) are 16-17 years old (double Gates holdovers). As a result, many will be advised to enter Project Success, an in-house GED program for students 16 and over, paid for by tax levy funds.

Allocation: 1.47 units

Note: Since this school is a target school, it has extra personnel resources in the form of a community team. This has enriched the PREP program staff. One guidance counselor puts 1/3 of his time into the program, one family assistant monitors attendance, and two teachers -- relieved of one class each -- supervise and coordinate the program.

School 9: This academic/comprehensive school has 100 PREP B and 35 PREP A students. The monitoring study focused on the PREP B program. The theme is "career opportunities" in a particular field. The supervisor believes that it is best to insert the theme bit by bit so that it is not disruptive. "It should be an actual outgrowth of what's going on and, hopefully, the addition of trips will do the trick," he said. The program aims to increase students' self-esteem and sense of opportunity, and to provide a literacy stress using the "jobs discovery theme" to hook students' interest. A typical day for a PREP student is block programmed for two periods of math and English (one of each is in a lab), one period of gym, social studies, and a "hands-on" experience either in key-boarding or industrial arts. The class size is about 18-20. Teachers were chosen by the principal and extra funds were used to hire four student mentors. The school intends to implement an intensive counseling program because the PREP B population is so "problematic," particularly in the realm of attendance. The supervisor and principal were glad to give this population more attention but felt that the resources provided were not adequate for the amount of special attention needed to motivate the students. They did not know what would happen to these students after PREP, but hoped the curriculum they had chosen would help guide these students toward positive options.

Allocations: 1.47 units were used for a family assistant to monitor attendance. One AP was relieved of his duties and became the PREP supervisor. Note: This school won a special grant from a private corporation to boost its activities and provide it with extra resources of its own choosing.

School 10: For the 120 students in the PREP B program of this vocational high school the PREP program was expected to be (because of their age and long-term absence tendencies) a "terminal educational experience." Hence the theme and stress of the program is to equip students with life skills, such as

literacy. A typical PREP B student's day is a three period block of English and math (1 1/2 periods of each), one period of gym, and then art, shop, and career education into which math and English skills are infused. Students receive an exploratory shop experience; in career education they learn "life and job competency," and in art they learn how to express themselves in different media. The program is based on a minischool structure which, due to scheduling difficulties and an inadequate supply of rooms and furniture, made the program's commencement difficult. The class size averages around 20 but the supervisor feels this is too large for students who are functionally illiterate, as many were. Teachers volunteered for the program after a positive summer experience. There has been no planning for life after PREP and no seats in the 10th grade vocational education classes have been reserved for these students; the supervisor believes that a continuation of this year's program for the same students would truly ensure that students had become literate. "It's asking a lot to think that in one year we can take care of nine or ten years of illiteracy," the supervisor said.

Allocation: 1.47 units which were used to hire a family assistant to monitor attendance. A guidance counselor was also made available up to spend all his time supervising the PREP program.

School 11: This vocational school with 90 PREP A and 90 PREP B students was beset with administrative and space difficulties from the outset. These problems lasted until mid-November. At that point classrooms were found for students, PREP A and B students were separated, the supervisor found an office and a means of tracking all the students, and attendance rates experienced a mild upsurge. According to the supervisor the average PREP B student is older than the average 9th grader or PREP A student. Their problems with attendance and behaving in the classroom make them a more difficult population to deal with. The supervisor believes that "for many kids PREP B is going to be a terminal experience. As a realist I can see that making these kids work-ready is important so I plan to reserve vocational education seats for them for next year's class." He sees the PREP program as a two-step process: (1) holding power/attendance, and (2) raising math and reading levels so students can function in mainstream high school classes. A typical PREP student's day is block programmed into three periods of English (English literature, reading and skills), math (and math skills), social studies, and art. As yet there is no shop class space available but the supervisor hopes that instead of art, students will take shop in the spring and that the hands-on focus will become central to the program. Curricula is presently undergoing review as

the preceding curricula was found to be unusable for the majority of the PREP B population. Teachers were assigned to the program. Class size ranges from 25 to 38. As students' attendance increases the class size reduces teachers' ability to give specialized attention, according to the supervisor.

Allocation: 1.47 units which provided a full-time family assistant and guidance counselor, and allowed the PREP supervisor to spend all his time on PREP.

The variety in the implementation of the PREP program, its staffing, and the Board's and principals' allocations of tax levy funds suggest that the emphasis on school choice and school creativity was not always helpful, particularly for those schools (primarily comprehensive schools) with no or few resources to provide a hands-on approach or a curriculum enriched by a theme. The issue of resources being inadequate for reaching the Board's goals was continually cited by school personnel. This is best illustrated by the range in class size; schools with extra resources were able to reduce the size of PREP classes.

The issue of the purpose of the theme and theme-integrated approach deserves attention. Is the theme the means for teaching skills or important material in itself? Should it be used for holding power or literacy? Should the theme "hook" a student's interest or should it be the end result, goal, and focus of the curriculum? These questions went unanswered in the summer program where Minimum Learning Essentials (MLE)* were not a focal and worrisome point. However, in the 9th grade where MLEs are mandated and tested, this question is left up to the school's discretion and

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* These are the minimum curriculum components developed by the Board for every grade.

the student's luck. Will students be prepared for year-end tests? Notably, in some cases, it seemed the curriculum was selectively fit into the theme and not vice versa.

All these questions and disparities originate from schools' differences in their perception and philosophy of what PREP should be doing for students and the degree of their commitment to the program. Particularly in PREP A schools, the extent of change in PREP curriculum from the regular curriculum, judged only on the basis of interviews with supervisors, was minimal. While some of the PREP B schools seem to think PREP will be a terminal experience for their students, others do not. This philosophy is reflected in the curriculum. In two schools with PREP B programs the programs were not consistent even though they had the same basic resources available.

While one could point to the lack of lead time and funding as the causes of inconsistent and inadequate programming, it seems that these alone cannot explain schools' reluctance to accept and integrate the PREP program. Clearly, many school officials felt it was simply a poorly articulated idea. Whatever the cause, until the ends of PREP are clarified, the means will be confused and students will suffer.

Furthermore, schools where more than a third of the ninth grade students are PREP-eligibile either cannot integrate PREP into their existing holding power programs or find PREP a programmatic imposition hard to implement because of inadequate funding. They question the seriousness of the effort and possibility of such a

program succeeding when the methods and structure used in the ninth grade are suddenly deemed insufficient and required to be replaced -- suddenly (albeit correctly in some cases), without planning -- by a poorly defined substitute.

V. ALLOCATIONS

In general, PREP students are also eligible for non-credit bearing PSEN/Chapter I remedial classes, funded by state and federal supplementary money. These classes are limited in size, usually to 20 students and are taken in addition to students' regular courses. The funding plans, put forth in August, were to provide enough money for enriched staffing (family paras, teachers and guidance counselors depending on the number of PREP students enrolled in each school) and for reducing PREP math and English classes to 20 students each (two classes/ day for PREP A students or four classes/day for PREP B students to be provided in addition to these students' PSEN/Chapter I remedial classes).

It was estimated that the additional PREP services would cost 180.46 units* or approximately $5.68 million. Since tax levy dollars were not sufficient for this cost, schools were to re-allocate a portion of their PSEN/Chapter I funds for these additional classes. Allocations of additional discrete units of tax levy funding were calculated for each school to fund the enriched support services so that a combination of tax levy and available PSEN funds could meet these additional funding needs for the PREP program. That is, the tax levy funds were to cover the PREP program costs not covered by PSEN funds already allocated to the school. In addition, for schools that "lost" more than 1/3 of their total PSEN allocation to the PREP program, an additional allocation (called PSEN replacement units) was made so that no more than 1/3 of their PSEN allocation would have to be used for the PREP program.

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* A unit is equal to the average high school teacher's salary.

September Memorandum #17 specified that the units were given out "in such a way as to ensure they would be used for staff." However, a subsequent addition to Memorandum #17 in December said the units could be used in "any manner consistent with school PREP plans." This was confirmed by the Board PREP coordinator who specified trips as among the approved uses.

The actual uses of the tax-levy allocations in the schools visited were as follows: One school reduced a remediation class size; six schools hired family assistants to monitor attendance; two schools hired a family assistant and guidance counselor; and two relieved a teacher or guidance counselor of several classes to coordinate PREP. Two of the supervisors had been relieved of other duties to coordinate PREP, and they were coordinating PREP B "minischools."

Of the supervisors interviewed, five said they wanted more money for materials, textbooks and trips; three said they wanted to reduce class size and pay student mentors; and three said they wanted both OTPS funds and additional staff. (Additional OTPS allocations for these purposes were provided for the spring semester.)

In addition to the inadequacy of the allocations, there have been many complaints about the accuracy and fairness of the allocations, either because of mistakes in register estimates, or because of register changes that occurred after the allocations had been determined.

The High School Division, using only school's PREP estimates, though they knew that not all high schools had received complete records for incoming ninth graders, severely under or overestimated

In summary, then, of the 180.46 units needed for PREP programs, 51.87 were provided with tax levy funds and 128.59 were removed from other PSEN programs, of which only 36.4 units were replaced. Chart I (p. 34) displays the final allocations for the fall PREP program for the 11 schools surveyed.

It should be noted that schools providing PREP services experienced a loss of PSEN funds available for tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders. Or else, PSEN funds for ninth graders were to be stretched to fund both PSEN and PREP classes. Many schools were forced to use their regular tax levy money to compensate for services previously funded with PSEN funds. Often, in fact, PREP classes were not limited to 20, but ranged in size from 25-38 students, most in the latter end of that continuum. Also, the same amount of city tax levy funds, .35 units, was allocated to schools with registers ranging from 30 all the way up to 250 students. Only 1.4 units were provided to schools with registers which ranged from 250 up to 500.

Most supervisors interviewed questioned the extent of the Board's commitment to the PREP goals for extra support for the students, considering the inadequate funding. Eight of the eleven specified the need for reduced class size. One noted, "Right now, my PREP kids are in classes with 30-35 kids. They're not getting anything different from what they would have gotten in a regular high school environment, except that it's called PREP."

The supervisors also noted the need for funding for other-than-personnel needs. On this point, the High School Division's directions about the use of the extra tax levy units were contradictory. The

CHART 1

Unit Allocation for PREP Programs

School	Summer Est. of Prep A&B Register	Tax-Levy Allocation	Net PSEN	PSEN Replacement Units	Total PREP Program Cost
1	400	1.47	1.75	1.8	5.02
2	74	.35	.38	.2	.93
3	290	1.47	1.68	1.0	4.15
4	170	.35	.74	1.4	2.49
5	310	1.47	2.24	.6	4.31
6	118	.35	1.13	0	1.48
7	106	.35	1.04	0	1.39
8	381	1.47	3.00	.4	4.87
9	147	1.47	1.73	1.4	4.60
10	358	1.47	1.41	3.4	6.28
11	206	1.47	1.94	1.4	4.81

CHART 2

PREP Registers, Projected and Actual

School	PREP Type	Summer Est. of Fall Register	November Register**	Change
1	A	400	500	+25%
2	A	74	32	-57%
3	A	290	280	-3.5%
4	A	170	75	-56%
5	A	310	180	-42%
6	A	118	90	-24%
7*	A	106	107	1%
8	A	381	450	+18%
9	A/B	123	106	-14%
10	B	125	107	-14%
11	B	91	90	-1%

* This particular school would not allow over the counter admissions into PREP in order to keep PREP fixed at 100 students.

** Those identified as eligible and whose records are coded as PREP students, but not necessarily in special PREP-designated classes.

Source: Division of High Schools: PREP Program Cost Analysis August 19, 1983.

the number of incoming PREP-eligible students. Furthermore, many students dropped out or never entered the designated school. The second chart demonstrates the difference in the projected number of incoming students and the actual register of identified PREP students. As a result, there are large disparities in the allocations among programs.

At one of the monthly supervisors' meetings, the subject of funding reductions for schools with PREP allocations higher than their register warranted was discussed. The representative of the Division of High Schools stated that schools' allocations would be reduced for the spring semester if their PREP registers fell below a certain, undefined level. Initially, supervisors at the meeting were outraged; they felt that what little allocation they had could still be used on remaining students in the program. When interviewed later, only two out of 11 supervisors understood the adjustement process, while four supervisors did not know it existed, and the remaining five did not know how it would work.

The High School Division plans to make adjustments in the spring allocation based on the difference between the fall PREP register/allocation and the spring PREP-eligible register/allocation. New students, determined to be PREP-eligible according to the October PSEN tests, are to be considered part of the spring register and the change in numbers of PREP students will be reflected in the change in allocation. Spring PREP programs will also receive additional Chapter I and II funds.

Several program implementation problems were directly caused by the inadequacy of the funding. These included:

- some principals had not made the full PREP allocation available to PREP-related services;
- the additional PREP staff had to be shared with other programs;
- there was inadequate funding for support services;
- PSEN class size was smaller than the accompanying PREP class size which created scheduling difficulties;
- no money was allocated for extra supplies to provide the hands-on approach.

At the school level, the primary complaint about the allocations was that there was "not enough for too many students and the PREP goals."

One supervisor also had a philosophic problem with the allocation procedure. While five of the 11 supervisors interviewed agreed that PREP allocations were suffering in deference to the Full Day Kindergarten Program, one supervisor felt the "robbing from Peter to pay Paul" syndrome was extant even within the ninth grade and that larger problems and the prevention of potential problems were left unattended.

> The PREP kid gets a little bit more attention, more special help, an occasional trip, more than the non-PREP kid, who's reading on, say, the eighth grade level, who comes to school everyday, who's well behaved and whom I can't give anything. What about the kid who is doing everything right? What can I give him?

While allocations at the school level have caused furor; allocations for PREP at central headquarters were also inadequate. The Board's PREP coordinator is in charge of coordinating, monitoring and assisting implementation of the PREP program at 91 high schools. He has no support staff. Unlike the summer program, there is no

system of itinerant supervisors visiting schools to monitor programs and correct difficulties, to provide staff development and to report back to the Board on the schools' progress. There is no central office scheduling trips or activities. Technical assistance in curriculum development and theme integration can be obtained only by talking to specialists in the Division of Curriculum and Instruction.

At the borough-level, each superintendent's office has a staff person assigned to monitor the programs. This assignment, however, is an addition to the staff person's regular duties.

The funding for PREP was clearly inadequate. Schools were asked to increase services for PSEN-eligible ninth grade PREP students in part by reallocating funds away from other PSEN-eligible students. Clearly this contributed to the general confusion regarding the program and the absence of services in some schools. Services cannot be provided without funding. However, as has been discussed, the lack of funding is not the entire cause of PREP problems. Increased funding will be available in the spring (from Chapter I and II), but this will not rectify the situation without improved program planning. In fact, of the five high schools with no PREP program at the time of our site visits, only one had made plans for new programming for the spring by the start of the semester.

VI. TEACHER TRAINING

During the summer PREP program staff development was ongoing, occurring one afternoon a week. Teachers spoke with an itinerant supervisor, discussed techniques with other teachers, and planned team approaches together.

For both the summer and school-year program the Division of Curriculum and Instruction and the Division of High Schools developed curricula. The new curricula focused on how to integrate a variety of themes into the core subject areas of math and English. According to Memorandum #102 (June 1, 1983), the materials would "form the basis for staff development of supervisors, teachers and guidance counselors working in this program, 1983-84." Staff development, the memo said, had started in June 1983 and would continue through August 1984 and would "emphasize the use of specific assessment instruments, curricula and strategies for implementation." Other mention of staff development was made at the monthly coordinators meetings when resources and technical assistance at the Board were offered and when representatives and staff developers from the State Education Department came to monitor and provide technical assistance for the program.

In fact, no staff development in schools actually occurred, according to 10 of the 11 supervisors interviewed. Only at the monthly meetings was it attempted for an hour of each afternoon session. That "training" was for supervisors -- not teachers -- and was performed informally at best. No teacher training days or

model classrooms were provided to high school teachers. All information for teachers was received through the intermediary of the PREP supervisor.

Surveyed school personnel uniformly agreed that the team approach and the active commitment and enthusiasm for working with PREP students was fundamental to the program, as the EPP observed in the summer program. The team approach was the linchpin to the successful program-wide integration of the theme. For instance: working as a team, the social studies teacher's choice of subject could be complemented by readings in English class, and a scientific experiment could be supplemented by mathematical exercises. Currently, this approach is rarely found and hard to achieve. Since the program was not planned at the school until well into September, there was no time to facilitate its implementation by scheduling a common planning period for teachers or developing a team approach. Common planning periods are projected for the spring term.

The effect of this planning snafu has been the decline of morale among teachers. Supervisors already are worrying about "recruiting" volunteer teachers for next year because this year's volunteers are, according to supervisors, "fed up," "overworked," and "dealing with unrealistic class loads and conditions." Their burdens are complicated by the fact that not all are adequately trained in remediation teaching. The following anecdote told by a supervisor in a school offering PREP A and B reflects both points:

> We had no space and I was told to integrate my PREP A and PREP B classes; so I put the students from three classes in the teacher's cafeteria. We had a remedial English and math class going and a social studies class all at once, with 100 kids and no partitions between them. The teachers kept overhearing each

> other. In the math and social studies classes the kids were wild -- fidgety, rambunctious -- I had to stay there just to keep them in control. The kids in the English class were so well behaved it was miraculous. The two other teachers and I looked at what he was doing. The English teacher was an ex-elementary school teacher and all he'd done was treat the class like sixth graders, spell everything big and clearly on the blackboard, and talk slowly, repeat and reinforce an idea, and the kids paid attention even in that classroom situation.

This anecdote shows, how the late planning of the program led to "difficult" teaching conditions. It also demonstrates the need for remediation-oriented teaching which most teachers are not prepared for -- and some may be unwilling to do. The Board's oversight in this matter will cause long-term programmatic problems, one supervisor suggested. "Teachers make or break this type of program: how well it works depends on their goodwill." Another coordinator noted, "It's very frustrating for the teachers -- they're trained to be high school teachers and don't know how to get through to kids who need elementary teaching." To overload teachers and provide limited or non-existent support and remediation teaching skills development is to limit their ability, hurt their morale, and make them "want to give up," the majority of supervisors noted.

At the last PREP supervisors' monthly meeting attended by EPP staff, the Draft Addendum to Memorandum #17 (December 13, 1983) noted that each school should schedule regular staff development sessions between the PREP supervisor and PREP staff. It said that this can be facilitated by:

- Programming PREP teachers -- or clusters of PREP teachers -- for a common professional period.

- Programming teachers with PREP classes for at least two such classes.

- Utilizing a portion of the tax-levy funding to provide per-session staff development time before or after school.

The "how" of staff development and its goals -- perhaps better rapport with PREP students, creation of a team approach -- are not addressed. While the memo discussed the importance of central staff development, PREP supervisor's meetings, and "articulation of PREP to all school personnel," no mention was made of remediation teaching methods/skills development.

VII. EVALUATION OF THE PREP PROGRAM

The High School Division initially outlined six ways in which it planned to evaluate the PREP program:

a) Reading and/or mathematics improvement as measured by the October (Pre) and May (Post) PSEN test.

b) Writing improvement evaluated holistically.

c) Monthly attendance figures for PREP students.

d) Monthly discharge data for PREP students.

e) Attitude measures - subjectively evaluated at the school.

f) School program evaluation - in addition to the program-wide evaluation, each school will plan evaluation for the components of its school-based plan.

(Memorandum #17, September 15, 1983)

Items "b," "e" and "f" have yet to be implemented. Supervisors surveyed, in fact, knew of only items "a," "c" and "d" as monitoring measures. They said they had not received visits or evaluation questionnaires from central headquarters. The Board's PREP coordinator said he visited the schools "not as a monitor but as a resource person and evaluator of needs." He makes "assistance visits" -- since there is no funding for structured monitoring or evaluation -- "more with an eye towards helping than catching. However, we'll cite schools for noncompliance. If a school has no program, it's unacceptable. We plan to help those schools." (Interview 12/7/83)

While the Division also directed the superintendents' offices to be involved in monitoring Prep programs based on the school plan they received, no school supervisor interviewed said this had been

the case; superintendents' liaison people had offered assistance but had not come to evaluate the programs.

Supervisors understood the rationale for using attendance and discharge rates of PREP students as criteria for evaluating their PREP program's success, but they did not feel it was appropriate, much less fair, considering the late start-up, poor planning and systemwide unevenness of the program and its implementation. Furthermore, some supervisors wondered what the Board would actually do if the program showed attendance losses. "How can they penalize us?" one supervisor asked. "Are they going to cut out my family assistant? What good would that do?" Many supervisors noted that the PREP population, especially PREP B, is composed of some students with long-standing attendance difficulties; will the Board consider this in making programmatic evaluations, they wanted to know. Another implementation problem is that some schools still have not properly segregated PREP students on attendance forms, thereby preventing the holding power effectiveness from being judged.

What is lacking is an ongoing structured approach to analyzing how well the PREP program in a school answers the needs of PREP students. The Office of Educational Evaluation (OEE) is launching a four-year study of the project, but the results of OEE studies are generally a long time in being published and do not offer schools the necessary feedback when they need it.

Finally, the use of October and April PSEN scores as pre- and post-test measures of improvement is questionable. School personnel dispute the practice from an evaluational viewpoint -- using a single

instrument to judge academic improvement -- and from a historic one -- the Board declared that the August CAT tests of summer PREP students were declared "invalid" measurements and could be used, if at all, only as placement guides, not to evaluate the programs.

VIII. SPRING PREP

The Board's current plans are to continue PREP this summer and next year and to strenghten the spring programs. The Board of Education has submitted a request for $7.1 million in the 1985 budget for PREP, in addition to $31.2 million for general improvement of high school instruction. The Board's PREP coordinator suggested that four priorities will receive special attention. They are: 1) reduction of class size, 2) provision of money for teacher training and a common planning period, 3) enrichment monies for trips, and other extracurricular activities, and 4) monies for supplies and materials. Since all these priorities require funds to implement, they will therefore be achieved only if funding for the program is approved for next year.

At the December supervisors' meeting, the faculty advisory committee announced its agenda for spring and future PREP improvement. They suggested: 1) a needs assessment of each school's program and staff to provide tailored in-service teacher training courses; 2) building PREP students' self-esteem; 3) teaching mainstream teachers how to work with PREP students; 4) building teachers' morale; 5) developing theme-related curriculum in schools; 6) allowing for a common planning period; 7) allowing latitude in programming (not exclusively block programmed); and 8) having consistent citywide instruction in math and English so transferring students will not experience trouble.

There have been some changes for the spring PREP program. For instance: the High School Division published a directory of PREP program supervisors; reduced the number of out-of-school supervisors' meetings to once every two months; provided OTPS allocations for trips and other enrichment through Superintendents' discretionary dollars (less than 60 schools); and will be funding mentors in 25-50 schools. Approximately $100,000 to $150,000 will be added in OTPS allocations for these purposes. Most importantly, approximately 100 additional units (more than $3 million) have been distributed to the 92 schools from PSEN/Chapter I midyear increases. Much of this will go towards the increased registers (50 percent above the fall) but some will call for increased services.

Schools will have to make changes, too. The results of the PSEN tests in October, for example, will create a new group of PREP-eligible students. On the basis of these test scores, a total of 15,109 students will be eligible for PREP (including those already in PREP programs), and an unknown number of others will have "tested out" of the PREP program. Schools will have to accommodate this group of newly identified students. This has caused distress among supervisors who said, when interviewed informally, they expected their PREP registers to increase significantly, in some cases, by 100 percent. One of the surveyed school PREP coordinators noted that according to the PSEN test results in his school, the PREP program would be six times larger. Instead of taking all PREP-eligible students, he chose to take only those students with the most extreme writing and reading needs, leaving the others in regular classes.

However, allocations alone will not solve the impending programming and class-size problems expected to result from the increase in PREP registers. Inevitably, some new PREP students will be identified and enter the PREP program after all students have been programmed for spring. One supervisor remarked at the December meeting, "They are creating a situation for February like the one we just went through in September."

In addition, schools must find some means to: provide a common planning period for PREP teachers (in some cases, there have been discrete units available for this); utilize their tax-levy funds, if necessary, to provide per-session payments for staff development; make all school personnel aware and supportive of PREP; and calculate all register and attendance statistics of PREP A and B students.

Junior high and intermediate schools are supposed to start identifying students (based on April 1984 CAT scores) to reduce the burden on high schools. These students will also be eligible for a planned summer program. But changes in the planning of next year's PREP program are not yet apparent.

The structural question of what happens "After PREP," particularly for students who have failed PREP, has yet to be answered. While the Board PREP coordinator considers it a "little premature" to worry about that problem, all PREP supervisors interviewed were concerned about the lack of thought on the issue. One supervisor remarked:

> No one knows what's going to happen next year for students who passed PREP. What about the ones who failed? Next year, if we get a new PREP group plus

> have this second year group of PREP, we'll end up having four years of PREP students. Will that mean we will have two separate high schools? I worry about this, because these questions affect curricula, too.

Some supervisors argue that they would take additional funding to simply reduce class size before creating and implementing a new program. In the meantime, while future planning for PREP lags at the Board, the admissions process for next year's ninth grade is almost completed, assigning a new group of PREP-eligible students to schools with little preparation.

APPENDIX

Contacts: _____
_____
_____

PREP Type: _____
Date: _____

PREP PROGRAM AUTUMN SITE VISITS QUESTIONNAIRE

I. Admissions

1) a) How many 9th grade students were you expecting? What's the size of a regular 9th grade?

b) How many PREP A/B students were you expecting?

2) a) How many came the first day (total)?

b) How many PREP A/B students came?

c) How many "over-the-counter" admits did you get? Is there a procedure to admit any OTCs to PREP?

3) Did you actively try to recruit the others? What methods did you use? Were you able to reach all of the students? Did you have any contact with the feeder schools?

4) Did you notice any cases of double assignment of students? How did you cope with this?

5) For PREP B Schools: Did any of the students want to go back to their zoned schools? What were their reasons?

What is the procedure for returning a student to his/her zoned school?

6) Have you found any "mainstream" students who ought to be in PREP?

7) Comments on the admissions process:

II. Allotments

1) Do you have a Title I/PSEN program?
How many units (total)? How many 9th graders usually?
How many students?
Do you plan to use it for the PREP program?

2) Did you receive any additional PREP allocation? What do you plan to use it for? What has it been used for? Do you consider it sufficient for the number of students?

3) What do you need more money for, OTPS or PS expenditures? such as?

4) How do you understand the penalty process if your register falls below your PREP allocation?

5) Comments on allocation process:

III. Program

1) Have you submitted a school plan for the PREP program to your superintendent? Could I obtain a copy?

Was the plan development structure a helpful tool for creating the PREP program?

2) Did you receive technical assistance from the Board for developing the plan? From who?

3) Did you receive comments about the plan from the superintendent?

4) What school support have you received from department chairpeople and your principal?

5) How is the program structured? What do you consider to be the program's 'hook'? What is the aim of the program: holding power or literacy? How is this different from regular Title I/PSEN programs?

6) Have you separated PREP A & B students from one another? Why? If you combined the classes, how do you evaluate whether the lessons address PREP A & B students' needs appropriately?

7) Have you block-programmed the PREP students? What is a typical schedule for a PREP student? Have you had space or scheduling difficulties? What is the average non-Chapter I/PSEN class size? Is this different from regular classes.

8) Where do students who are ahead in math but behind in reading go? (Vice-versa.) How do they get scheduled?

9) How did you choose teachers? Are any trained as elementary school teachers? What training did teachers receive in remediation techniques?

10) What vocational education opportunities will these students have this year? Do you consider a primary concern of the PREP program is to make PREP students work-ready? How does voc ed fit in with the theme of the program? Has the teaching of voc ed classes been adapted to the reading level of this population? Do you plan to reserve vocational seats for them for next year's classes? Has the H.S. Division suggested you do so?

11) What arrangements have you made for bilingual students? Where do they fit in? How many LEP students do you have?

12) Will any PREP students be referred to special ed?

IV. Comments

1. Generally, what do you think about the program?

2. What are its strong points and possible benefits?

3. What are its weaknesses?

4. What are your suggestions for structural or thematic changes in the PREP program's design and implementation?

5. Are the monthly AP meetings helpful? When you ask for assistance from the Board who do you receive it from? Is it helpful?

6. What do you foresee will happen to PREP students after this year?